

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 18, 2012

[in advance of first day of winter]

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Dept on Aging Offers Tips to Help Seniors Prepare For Winter

Seniors Should Get Flu Shots & Get Homes Ready;

More Tips at www.keepwarm.illinois.gov

SPRINGFIELD - December 18, 2012. As the area braces for the first snow storm of the season in the days leading up to the first official day of winter, Illinois Department on Aging Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., reminds older adults and their families to get ready for the cold weather.

“There remains some uncertainty about the amount and duration of snowfall expected this week, but the fact we know it’s coming is a great reminder to get prepared for the cold,” said Director Holton. “Older adults, their families and caregivers, who assist, should make necessary arrangements to best deal with the cold and snowy weather. It’s important to be prepared.”

People ages 50 and older are urged to get vaccinated against flu since they are considered at higher risk for influenza. The flu season runs through April and is predicted to be particularly strong this season.

Seniors should set their thermostats above 65 degrees. Older persons are more susceptible to the cold. People who lower the thermostat to reduce heating bills risk developing hypothermia, a potentially fatal condition in which the body temperature drops dangerously low. Also at an increased risk are older people who take certain medications, drink alcohol, lack proper nutrition and who have conditions such as arthritis, stroke, Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease.

Have the furnace checked to make sure that it is in good shape and heating ducts are properly ventilated. Proper ventilation is also a concern when using alternative heat from a fireplace, wood stove or space heater. If you use heating oil, make sure that you have enough.

The state has a website that offers information about how to battle winter in Illinois and about available resources so seniors aren’t left to make difficult decisions like, whether to pay their heating bills or take their prescription medications this winter. For more information on how to keep warm, including tips to keep you safe and self-reliant in case of power failure, call 1-877-411-WARM or log on to www.keepwarm.illinois.gov.

Some other practical tips for seniors, in anticipation of the cold weather ahead, include:

- Dressing in layers, both indoors and outdoors.
- Keeping active: do exercises/activities indoors when you can’t go out.
- Eating well/drinking 10 glasses of water daily; Stocking up on non-perishable food supplies, just in case.
- Keeping extra medications in the house or making arrangements to have your medications delivered.

- Having your house winterized: caulk and weather-strip doors/windows; Insulate walls/attics/pipes near outer walls/crawl spaces that are susceptible to freezing.
- Planning for someone else to shovel the snow. The strain from the cold and hard labor could cause a heart attack; sweating can lead to a chill and even hypothermia.
- Making sure you and your family knows how to shut off the water supply in case pipes burst.
- Preparing your vehicle for winter: check wipers/tires/lights/fluid levels regularly; keep a windshield scraper/small broom for ice and snow removal; maintain at least a half tank of gas during the winter season.
- Planning long trips carefully: travel by daylight with at least one other person.
- Protecting against fire: buy a fire extinguisher; make sure space heaters are at least three feet from anything flammable; do not overload extension cords.

For more information about programs and services to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, call the Department on Aging Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.